

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 003240

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT CHEN REITERATES "REPUBLIC OF CHINA IS TAIWAN"

REF: 2004 TAIPEI 3265

Classified By: AIT Deputy Director David J. Keegan. Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary. Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian, in extemporaneous comments to a pro-independence visiting delegation on August 2, reiterated publicly the phrase "the Republic of China (ROC) is Taiwan," a statement first presented in his Double Ten speech last year. Presidential insiders insist Chen said nothing new and may have actually been trying to dampen pro-independence enthusiasm among deep Green youth. Premier Hsieh's offer of flexibility on cross-Strait links may have been intended as a moderate counter to Chen's deep Green remarks. Nonetheless, Chen's suggestion that Taiwan is in the fourth stage of an evolving relationship with the ROC will be an unsettling reminder to many here and in Beijing of Chen's sympathy at least for the pro-independence objectives of his "deep Green" supporters. End Summary.

2. (U) On August 2, President Chen spoke to a delegation of twenty "Youth Goodwill Ambassadors" sponsored by the U.S.-based Formosa Foundation and accompanied by Formosa Foundation Chairman and Presidential Advisor Wu Li-pei. In his remarks, President Chen Shui-bian repeated the cryptic but, to Beijing, troublesome phrase "ROC is Taiwan." He also unveiled his new description of the development of the relationship of the ROC and Taiwan, concluding with the statement that the fourth and current stage is "the ROC is Taiwan."

Extemporaneous Comments, Not Prepared Speech

3. (C) Presidential Senior Counselor and speechwriter Liu Shi-chung told AIT that Chen's statement was extemporaneous, not a formal speech from a prepared text. The transcript on the Presidential Office website, he explained, was based on a transcript made by a Presidential Office press officer during Chen's statement. As with many of Chen's courtesy calls with high profile visitors or supporters, television cameras were present to record the President's comments, and clips were broadcast that evening.

A Matter of Audience

4. (C) Speechwriter Liu suggested to AIT that Chen's comments were largely colored by his audience and by coming political events. Chen, he noted, tends to speak directly to the audience in front of him, in this case the "deep-Green" Formosa Foundation. On Saturday, August 6, moreover, President Chen will attend the fourth anniversary celebration of the founding of the staunchly pro-independence Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), where he will share the stage with TSU "spiritual leader" and former President Lee Teng-hui. In

SIPDIS

the face of ongoing deep-Green criticisms of President Chen's cross-Strait policy, Liu maintained, the President's August 2 comments were an effort to find a "middle way" between Pan-Blue's "one China" and TSU's independence fundamentalism.

Background of Disappointment

5. (C) Chen's opening comments on APEC suggest a second motivation for his remarks -- his disappointment at being denied the opportunity to attend the upcoming APEC Leaders Meeting in Pusan. Presidential Deputy SecGen James Huang had told the Deputy Director earlier that Chen's July 22 announcement of his hope to personally attend APEC was intended primarily to demonstrate to the international community Chen's and Taiwan's sincerity and willingness to deal with the PRC; he had little or no expectation that his offer would be accepted. He was, nonetheless, deeply disappointed that there had not been more support for his proposal.

"ROC is Taiwan"

16. (C) NSC Senior Advisor Lin Cheng-wei noted that Chen first publicly uttered the controversial "ROC is Taiwan, Taiwan is ROC" formulation during his September 2004 visit to Belize. Chen was responding to widespread dismay in Taiwan over the treatment of Taiwan in the Summer Olympics (Taiwan's two gold medalists were denied both their national anthem and their national flag). Chen then reiterated the phrase in his October 10 ROC National Day speech, which speechwriter Liu acknowledged had caused considerable discomfort in the U.S. because that part of the speech had been a surprise, having been omitted from the speech draft that AIT previewed (see reftel). Liu noted that he had heard CSB use the phrase a number of times privately, but not publicly again until August 2.

Four Stages of ROC-Taiwan

17. (C) Regarding Chen's four stages in the relationship of the ROC and Taiwan, Lin acknowledged that this appeared to be a new sequence by Chen. He argued, however, that it was a natural outgrowth of Chen's October 10 speech "ROC is Taiwan, Taiwan is ROC" formulation. According to this sequence, the four stages are: "ROC is Mainland China" (1912-49), "ROC to Taiwan" (1949-88), "ROC on Taiwan" (1988-2000), and "ROC is Taiwan" (2000 and after). A TSU critic complained that Chen omitted the future "fifth stage" -- changing Taiwan's name and building a republic on Taiwan.

Another Motivation: "Let's Face Reality"

18. (C) James Huang, Deputy Secretary General in the President's Office, argued to AIT that Chen's remarks were not intended to please his audience but to caution them. Huang explained that the Formosa Foundation had selected its good will ambassadors from the families of its deep Green supporters where they would have heard unrealistic perspectives "on certain sensitive political issues." President Chen, he contended, did not want these youth to have any illusions. With that in mind, he offered an extemporaneous presentation of the difficulties Taiwan faces in the international environment, explaining why it was necessary for Taiwan to accept the term "Chinese Taipei" in the Olympics, APEC, and the WTO, then reviewing the difficulties Taiwan had encountered in seeking even observer status in the WHO. Chen offered this review so that they would understand why it is necessary to accept the ROC political system. Huang said that Chen offered this explanation in front of the Formosa Foundation to counter deep Green accusations that he had fallen into the "one China" trap by even offering to attend the APEC Leaders Meeting as the leader of "Chinese Taipei." The four stages were a secondary feature of Chen's remarks, Huang said, and not really anything new.

Comment: Unsettling Regardless of Motivation

19. (C) Chen's remarks may have been extempore, but they reflect, at a minimum, concepts that he has been refining in conversations with close advisors over some time. The fact that television cameras were present and the transcript was quickly put on the Presidential Office website leave room for the possibility that there may have been more method than chance to the President's "ROC is Taiwan" statement. If so, Premier Hsieh's indications today, August 3, that the government is prepared to be flexible on cross-strait charters and airline requests to overfly the PRC en route to Europe may serve to appeal to moderates here and soften PRC negative reaction to Chen's comments to the Formosa Foundation.

10 (C) While presidential insiders insist there is nothing new in Chen's speech, his suggestion that Taiwan is the fourth stage of an evolving relationship with the ROC will be an unsettling reminder to many here and in Beijing of Chen's sympathy at least for the pro-independence objectives of his "deep Green" supporters. AIT Deputy Director noted to Huang that this formulation will almost inevitably raise questions about where Chen and Taiwan are headed. Chen's appearance at the TSU anniversary this coming Saturday may be another occasion for him to play to a deep Green crowd.

PAAL